

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for performing an Internet search launched from an instant
2 messaging (IM) application, the method comprising:

3 providing a first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search of a
4 second IM user directly from the IM application;
5 transmitting a search query identifying the second IM user to a search server;
6 searching the Internet for web pages matching the search query to generate
7 search results using the search server;

8 accessing a user profile of the second IM user from an IM member profile
9 database;

10 sorting the search results in order of relevance to information in the user
11 profile of the second IM user; and

12 displaying the sorted search results to the first IM user.

1 2. The method as defined in claim 1 further comprising:

2 providing the first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search from the
3 IM application based on a topic; and
4 transmitting a second search query identifying the topic to the search server.

1 3. The method as defined in claim 2 further comprising:

2 searching the Internet for web pages matching the second search query to
3 generate second search results using the search server; and
4 displaying the second search results to the first IM user.

1 4. The method as defined in claim 2 wherein displaying the search results
2 further comprises displaying the user profile along with the search results.

1 5. The method according to claim 2 wherein providing the first IM user
2 with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM application based on the search
3 query further comprises automatically displaying a string that identifies the second IM user in
4 a dialog box.

1 6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the string is a name that is
2 accessed from an electronic address book.

1 7. The method according to claim 5 wherein the string is a identification
2 number that identifies the user profile.

1 8 . The method according to claim 1 wherein transmitting the search query
2 to the search server further comprises transmitting a URL that contains an ID identifying the
3 second IM user to the search server.

1 9. The method according to claim 1 wherein providing the first IM user
2 with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM application further comprises
3 providing a search option on a tool bar or drop down list on a screen displayed by the IM
4 application.

1 10. The method according to claim 1 wherein the sorted search results are
2 displayed in a web browser window generated by a web browser application.

1 11. A computer system for performing an Internet search launched from an
2 instant messaging (IM) application, the computer system comprising:

3 code for providing a first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search
4 of a second IM user directly from the IM application;

5 code for transmitting a search query identifying the second IM user to a search
6 server;

7 code for searching the Internet for web pages matching the search query to
8 generate search results using the search server;

9 code for accessing a user profile of the second IM user from an IM member
10 profile database;

11 code for sorting the search results in order of relevance to information in the
12 user profile of the second IM user;

13 code for displaying the sorted search results to the first IM user; and
14 a computer readable medium for storing the codes.

1 12. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for
2 displaying the sorted search results further comprises displaying the user profile of the second
3 IM user along with the search results.

1 13. The computer system according to claim 12 further comprising:

2 code for providing the first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search
3 from the IM application based on a topic; and
4 code for transmitting a second search query identifying the topic to the search
5 server.

1 14. The computer system according to claim 11 further comprising:
2 code for searching the Internet for web pages matching the second search
3 query to generate second search results using the search server; and
4 code for displaying the second search results to the first IM user.

1 15. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for
2 providing the first IM user with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM
3 application based on the search query further comprises code for automatically displaying a
4 string that identifies the second IM user in a dialog box.

1 16. The computer system according to claim 15 wherein the string is a
2 name that is accessed from an electronic address book.

1 17. The computer system according to claim 15 the string is a
2 identification number that identifies the user profile.

1 18. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for
2 transmitting the search query to the search server further comprises code for transmitting a
3 URL that contains an ID identifying the second IM user to the search server.

1 19. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for
2 providing the first IM user with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM
3 application further comprises code for providing a search option on a tool bar or drop down
4 list on a screen displayed by the IM application.

1 20. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the sorted search
2 results are displayed in a web browser window generated by a web browser application.